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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REPAIR WORK BEGINS ON BRICK TOWERS

Mayor Sharpe James announced today that he has received written confirmation that work is underway to repair elevator service at the Brick Towers apartment complex, where 10 residents held a demonstration Wednesday.

The residents had protested lack of security, deteriorating conditions and inadequate elevator services at the 16-story, 480 unit complex at 685 and 715 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. According to residents, elevator service in the two buildings has been out for a period of time.

Edwin McLucas, director of the Department of Land Use Control, said inspectors from his agency have responded to complaints about the building over the course of several months.

"Our inspectors have cited the owners of the property for elevator violations, and as a result, they are slated to appear in Newark Municipal Court, September 24 and 26," he stated.

The Mayor said his administration would stay "on top" of the situation until it is resolved and expressed hope that the municipal judge hearing the matter "would not be lenient" in her decision.

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James met Tuesday with tenants from the two buildings who had come to City Hall to protest their living conditions and assured them that the situation would be corrected.

Today, he received a letter from Meir N. Hertz, president of B.T.A. Properties, Inc. of Newark and Lakewood, owner of the King Boulevard complex, who informed him that there is elevator service in both buildings.

Hertz said one elevator is operating in each building and blamed the problems on "vandalism...and similar abuse."

He told the Mayor that his company has a \$1,200 a month contract with a "very reputable firm" from Palisades Park to provide elevator maintenance.

"Over and above the regular monthly maintenance costs, we have incurred an additional repair cost of approximately \$21,000, he said.

In addition, the owner said B.T.A. has commissioned an elevator engineer to develop a set of specifications for state required fire-safety improvements to the elevators, estimated to cost over \$200,000. This work, Hertz said, will restore an additional elevator to service to 715 King Blvd.

James said he was "pleased" to know that work had begun on the elevators, but said "it is too bad that the response had to come as the result of a tenant protest and accompanying publicity in The Star-Ledger.

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"However," he charged that "tenants too have a stake in maintaining an attractive, safe and clean living environment, and I would expect them to do their best to assist in this effort. But, a landlord does have an obligation to maintain his building."

McLucas said he personally visited the buildings today and found the elevators to be the most outstanding violaton. "Without them tenants, especially older tenants, face the hardships of having to walk up and down stairs."

The officials said B.T.A. has been in court on other occasions for other housing violations, many of which have been abated.